SP ENERGY NETWORKS

Creosote LV Pole use

Creosote has been used historically as the preservative of choice for wooden utility poles. Creosote is a well known and effective wood preservative. As it is derived from coal tar, creosote is a harmful substance, and is an IARC Group 2A carcinogen.

Creosote poles should not be installed in publicly accessible areas. The new framework for the supply of wood poles does not include the option to purchase creosote treated poles for use on LV overhead lines.

Creosote poles currently in the supply chain can, and should, be used on LV projects, to run down the stock. The supply of creosote treated poles for HV overhead lines is not currently changing.

Copper Biocide (water based Copper) poles are the current Approved option for LV overhead line construction. See OHL-04-018 for further guidance. Copper Biocide poles have a reduced life compared to creosote. It is therefore imperative that the preservative type is recorded accurately on Pole data sheets.

SPEN are leading UK industry in Project APPEAL to find alternative pole preservatives to creosote. This project has two Copper Oil based alternatives undergoing accelerated aging tests with un-treated and creosote treated wood samples as controls.

The Copper Oil preservatives are performing well in this project, indicating a similar asset life to creosote, and are currently being assessed for SPEN Approval.

Copper Oil poles will be installed in trials during 2022 as part of the Approval process.



Creosote treated pole



Copper Oil treated poles

Recommendations and action points

- SPEN staff and contractors involved in design, planning & delivery of LV OHL modernisation and construction shall be made aware of the guidance above.
- SPEN staff and contractors shall ensure that the preservative type is recorded accurately on data returns for wood poles.
- Creosote treated LV poles currently in stock shall only be utilised in areas which are not publicly accessible to run down stocks.
- ED&S will be looking for Districts to support field trials of Copper oil poles on LV projects